

(.The Splendor of the Holy Prophet of Islam (S.A.W

<"xml encoding="UTF-8?>

Previous Prophets mentioned some of the characteristics of the Holy Prophet of Islam in their heavenly books, giving their followers the glad tidings of his future appearance. As the Quran says:

"Those to whom We sent books (the Jews and the Christians) know well of Muhammad(S.A.W.) and his truthfulness, just as they know their own children, but some of them obstinately hide the truth, although they are well aware of it." (2:145)

In the troubled world of those days, cultural and moral decline, together with polytheism and idolatry and all their ramifications had submerged the whole globe. Even the heavenly religions that had followers in different parts of the world had undergone radical change in the course of time; not only had they lost all vitality and ability to guide mankind, but their most creative elements had fallen prey to decline.

There was no hope of infusing a new spirit of life in them, of making blood course once again through their hardened arteries. The People of the Book were therefore waiting for some profound eruption and the emergence of a new heavenly personality who would bear on his capable shoulders the heavy burden of guiding mankind, leading them away from decaying systems of thought to a new and progressive teaching. The world had reached the end of its tether in the midst of all that confusion and unrest. It longed for a whole new environment, different from the poisoned one in which it lived, and waited for a hand to emerge from the sleeve of the unseen which would destroy the crumbling structure of the old order and build a new one on its ruins. Each of the peoples and nations that were then dominating the world had in some way fallen prey to anarchy and confusion. The Arabs who lived at the crossroads of the great powers of that age and whose broad homeland was traversed by the caravans of international commerce felt more powerfully each day their weakness and impotence vis-a-vis their powerful neighbors.

The danger of complete extinction that faced the Arabs because of their lack of an organized political structure and because of the power of their oppressive neighbors, was plain to any farsighted person. It was under these circumstances that the promised deliverer Muhammad, upon whom be peace, was born at dawn on Friday, the seventeenth day of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal, fifty three years before the migration (hijra), corresponding to the year 570 of the Christian era, in the city of Mecca in the Arabian

Peninsula. It was a land of stifling repression, the very symbol of a sick and decadent society where ignorance was actively cultivated. It was like a swamp where the waters of corruption stagnated, a pit in which humanity had been buried.

It was in such a place that the Prophet first set eyes on the world and the light of his splendor first shone on the horizons of human life; it was there that this quintessence of being who was destined to bring human thought to maturity generated a new energy and an inexhaustible vitality in mankind. None could reach his level of excellence in the qualities he possessed, and all expectations were fulfilled with his coming. He appeared at a time that society was prepared for him because it needed him. Not only the Arabian peninsula but the world at large was prepared for his coming, because the whole of the ancient world was longing with all of its being for the appearance of a man who would take it by the hand and guide it to its goal.

The sphere of the heavens, in its prolonged and ceaseless rotation had never been able to bring forth a creature like him whose substance was pure and free of all defect, who was completely untainted by all imperfection. History bears witness that this blessed infant, whose splendor shone forth from the arms of his mother, Aminah, over the whole world, came to establish the most creative of all faiths and the purest, most profound and pervasive of impetus, for the cultivation of knowledge and spirituality.

By prohibiting flattery and subservience before the thrones of the emperors and the powerful, he awakened to new life the dormant minds of human beings and created a suitable environment for their cultivation. He drove away idols from the threshold of their veneration, instructing them instead in the mysteries of Divine unity and teaching them how to live and die with dignity.

As a result of his teachings, idolatry gave way to monotheism and the worship of the one true God; ignorance yielded to knowledge and science, brotherliness, compassion, and other human virtues took the place of hostility, hatred and discord; and those who had been reared in an atmosphere of corruption and ignorance became the choicest specimens of humanity. Abdullah, the father of the Prophet, was a descendent of Ishmael. His was a truly human heart, a heart that overflowed with love, fidelity and mercy. After marrying Aminah, he went trading in Syria, accompanying a caravan that was leaving Mecca. Aminah was already pregnant and impatiently awaited the return of her husband. But a severe illness laid hold of Abdullah, drawing the life out of him so that he died far away from his homeland. He closed his eyes on the world and its pleasures, full of painful regret that he would be unable to see Aminah again or the child that she was to bear him.

After a time, the young mother learned that in the sixteenth year of her life she had been

widowed and left alone with a small infant. Her father-in-law, Abd al-Mutallib, took her and the infant to his own house, and then decided to send his newborn grandson to the Banu Sa'd in the desert, to be suckled by them and to grow up in the pure air of the desert. Four months had passed after the birth of the Most Noble Prophet when the wetnurses of the Banu Sa'd came to Mecca and one of them, a woman of pure disposition called Halimah, declared herself ready to suckle the orphaned Muhammad. Halimah returned to the desert with the child to take care of him there and he stayed among the Banu Sa'd continuing to grow until he was weaned. Still, however, his grandfather continued to leave him in the care of the tribe until he was five years old, and throughout this period the kindly wetnurse took good care of him and paid attention to his upbringing.

He learned the best and most authentic dialect of Arabic, and imbibed the most eloquent forms of Arabic speech. Halimah took him to see his mother two or three times, and on the last of these occasions she turned him over to his mother. When a year had passed, Aminah left Mecca, taking him with her to show him to the wetnurses who lived in the villages between Mecca and Yathrib. Full of joyous satisfaction, she reached the dwelling places of the wetnurses, but she was not destined to return to Mecca. Aminah died in the course of her return journey and was buried where she died. Her infant orphaned son, now six years of age, was left alone at the side of her grave.

He had never seen his father nor had he fully enjoyed the kindness and affection of his mother for just as he was about to begin benefiting from her upbringing, fate snatched her away and left him alone in the awesome expanse of the desert. At the time of the death of his mother, the infant Prophet had reached the age when intellectual and spiritual characteristics begin to develop. His grandfather, Abd al-Mutallib, for whom he was the only reminder of his own son,

Abdullah, and a source of consolation for his weary heart, then assumed responsibility for his care and fulfilled this trust worthily until his death. This period in which the Prophet enjoyed the care and protection of his grandfather, which were like a soothing balm placed on his wounds, did not last long. Just as he reached the age of eight the life of Abd al-Mutallib came to an end. A new grief assailed the Prophet, lines of sorrow and pain became apparent in his face, and the powerful spirit that was never troubled by the perils he faced throughout his life was gripped by the pain of bereavement.

However, Divine favor had bestowed on him the ability to accept and endure these setbacks. For an orphan who was due to become the father of humanity and the comforter of all the burdened and oppressed in the world had to become acquainted, from childhood onward, with all forms of deprivation and affliction; he had to have a spirit as firm and resistant as a

mountain in order to carry on his shoulders the otherwise unbearable burden of the Divine message. The ability to resist and withstand all kinds of obstacles and difficulties was essential for him, and his lofty and expansive spirit was a sign that he possessed precisely this ability. The orphaned boy next moved to the house of his paternal uncle, Abu Talib, a great and noble person who was the full brother of his father.

Although he was surrounded by the kindness of his cousins in his uncle's house, Muhammad, upon whom be peace, naturally felt lonely. One morning he learned that his uncle Abu Talib was planning to journey to Syria, leaving him behind. Muhammad, upon whom be peace, then approached his uncle and asked him for permission to accompany him, but his uncle refused, since he was still too young to endure the rigors of travel. When the caravan was about to depart, Muhammad's eyes filled with tears, and Abu Talib was deeply moved by the sad expression on his face.

He was compelled to take him with him on his journey to Syria, and thus it was that at the age of twelve he set out on a journey to distant lands. Before the Quraysh caravan reached its destination, it passed through the city of Bostra where the party met a monk called Buhayra. Buhayra passed his days engaged in devotion in his cell, and being a man deeply learned in Christianity, he was revered by all of the Christians.

As soon as Buhayra caught sight of Abu Talib's nephew, he found himself profoundly attracted by him. His piercing and mysterious glances seemed to indicate some secret hidden in his heart. Finally Buhayra broke his silence and asked to whom this child belonged. The party pointed to his uncle, and Abu Talib said, "This is my nephew." Buhayra then said: "This child has a brilliant future in front of him.

This is the promised Messenger whose coming and prophethood have been foretold in the scriptures, and I see in his person all the signs mentioned in those books. He is that true Prophet whose name and family I have read of. I know where this great personality will rise to fame and how the Divine religion he brings will conquer the whole world. However, you must conceal him from the view of the Jews, because they will destroy him once they become aware of this."

Historians have clearly discerned in all dimensions of his person great spiritual energy and power, together with all the other qualities that are fitting in a great leader sent by heaven. No researcher or scholar can claim that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, fell prey at any point in his life to moral or spiritual deviation or to nervous excitement. Although the characteristics of the Prophet of Islam are more clearly and fully known than those of other people who have left their mark on history,

in the near or distant past, history cannot point to the slightest rebelliousness, ill-temper or evil conduct on his part, nor even to a single error or sin. The remarkable life of the exalted Prophet of Islam is clearly and completely known in all of its aspects: the period before his birth, his infancy, his youth, his moral characteristics, his travels, his marriages, his conduct in war and peace.

Recorded history bears witness that the slightest trace of corrupt belief cannot be found to have clouded his brilliant visage. Although he had no access to any form of instruction, he had no connection with the Age of Ignorance surrounding him, and vice was never able to take root in him. The creedal environment in which he grew up was a compound of polytheism and idolatry,

as is shown by the strong resistance of the Arabs to his summons to monotheism. The entirety of his early life was spent in the midst of an ignorant, evil-living and oppressive people and he never left that environment before the beginning of his mission with the exception of two journeys outside the Arabian Peninsula, once in childhood, in the company of Abu Talib, in the early part of the second decade of his life, and once in his mid-thirties when he went trading with the goods of Khadijah.

Nonetheless, we find not the least affinity between his personality and the society in which he lived. The aspect of his personality that was particularly valuable in that corrupt and polluted environment was his honesty, trustworthiness and unfailing sense of justice, together with his hostility to all the forms of humiliation from which mankind was suffering. Muhammad, upon whom be peace, captivated the hearts of his contemporaries with his nobility of character and his kindness toward the weak and the afflicted. Friend and enemy are agreed that none of the men of his age even approached him in the perfection of his attributes and spiritual characteristics.

For example, Zayd b. Haritha, who had been separated from his family at an early age and was given by Khadijah to the most Noble Messenger, upon whom be peace, as a slave, spent his entire life with him. After a time, Zayd's father came looking for him in order to reclaim him. Now Zayd had been emancipated by the Prophet, upon whom be peace, but he was still a slave to the love the greatness and the splendor of the Prophet, and captivated by the excellence of his conduct and behavior. So although he was free to return to his family, he preferred to remain with the Prophet and serve him.

Eloquence and profundity of speech, fairness in judging, superior intelligence and perception, heavenly disposition and brilliance of thought - all these were abundantly evident in the being of this great personage. They shone forth in all the varied scenes of his life, and he so lived that

years before the beginning of his prophetic mission, he was awarded the title "amin",
'trustworthy', an eloquent description of his whole mode of conduct.

During one of the religious festivals of the Quraysh, an incident occurred that struck a blow at the rule of the idolators. In the middle of the festival, while the people were gathered around an idol and rubbing their foreheads in the dust in front of it, a few clear-minded and pure-hearted people such as Waraqa b. Nawfal, who were distressed by the corruption prevailing in Mecca, began to discuss the situation. They asked themselves how much longer it could continue and when the time of delivery would come. Why were those people prostrating in front of objects, and why had they distorted the religion of their forefather Abraham? One of the things they said was this: "What is that piece of stone around which they are walking? A thing that neither sees nor hears, that does not breathe, that can give no benefit and inflict no harm!"

As the Prophet grew into maturity of the body and mind, he became inclined to periodic retreat and withdrawal. His profound inward thoughts, together with the unsuitability of his environment, impelled him to seek solitude. In his evaluation of phenomena he was never hasty nor dependent on his own ideas and perceptions. He clearly saw a hand that inscribed its will on the pages of nature, and this was itself an indication of the profundity of his vision and the
exaltation of his thought.

He would spend the month of Ramadan alone in the cave of Hira, on the outskirts of Mecca, benefiting fully from the darkness and silence. Far removed from men and their corruption, he engaged in supplication and armed himself with the weapon of faith. He developed his spiritual personality through humble worship in the presence of the Majestic Creator that enveloped his whole being, and through cultivating the thoughts that welled up from the depths of his spirit. In the morning, overflowing with faith and certainty, with spiritual enthusiasm and vigor, he
would leave the cave to engage in his daily tasks.

Love of God animated his kind and tranquil face, and he was greatly distressed by the polytheism and foolishness of his people who would prostrate before the idols they had manufactured themselves. He began to struggle against this idolatry, remaining steadfast in the truth through all the trials and hardships he underwent. As his age approached forty, signs of anxiety and distress became marked in his behavior and speech, and he told his loving wife of sounds that were continually re-echoing in his ear and of a dazzling light that would envelop
.him

Beginning of the Mission

Finally the appointed moment arrived, the moment which had been foretold by previous

Prophets to their followers. At the age of forty, the orphan son of Abdullah attained the exalted station of messengerhood. It was he alone that time had prepared for guiding the world with his message for only this great and heavy responsibility could call for such qualities and virtues as he possessed.

Only in such a vast enterprise could the energies of that quintessence of all existence unfold, for the entire being of Muhammad, upon whom be peace, was prepared to undertake the grave task of prophethood. If he had not been prepared, in the best possible way, to assume that sacred and fateful responsibility, there would have been none other in the world capable of conveying the Divine mission in all its dimensions. It was only the being of Muhammad, upon whom be peace, that was capable of stilling the thirst of the world. While engaged in worship in a corner of the cave of Hira in the heart of the night, the Prophet who had never studied or attended a school, was suddenly shaken by the summons, "O Muhammad!" followed by the command to recite, this being the beginning of revelation.

A wave arose from the limitless ocean of Divinity, rent the breast of the Prophet, bewildered and anxious, and filled to the brim the cup of his spirit. The shining of a light from the realm of the unseen covered and enveloped his being and shone forth on his fair features, giving rise to new and bright life in the darkness of the night. Then, with a painful tumult in his heart and bearing on his shoulders the heaviest responsibility conceivable, he set out for home from the cave of Hira, destined to become the teacher of all human beings and to assume the leadership of humanity on its long march forward. What force was it that had disquieted him despite his infinite patience, made him anxious despite all his tranquil courage, and plunged his whole being into painful turmoil?

Thereafter the envoy of revelation came repeatedly, reciting verses to him, profound and astounding verses that bore no resemblance from the point of view of style and content either to the words of the Prophet himself, eloquent as they were, or to the conventional prose and poetry of the age. Although the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance knew neither how to read nor how to write and had no historians, philosophers or scholars, they were famed for the excellence of their poetry and the eloquence of their speech. The Prophet, however, had never participated before the beginning of his mission in the cultivation of the arts of poetry and eloquence. His conduct, on the one hand, and the verses of the Quran, on the other, both testify that he made no compromises in conveying his message.

He conveyed the message that he had been ordered to deliver clearly, unambiguously and in utter contradiction both with the beliefs and inclinations of the people and with his own immediate interests. He loudly proclaimed the revelation he had received to the evil and the

ignorant, to a people made degenerate and corrupt by the worship of the idols they had fashioned themselves, and he informed them that their sole salvation lay in the worship of the
One God.

The new factor that appeared at a particular time in the life of the Prophet and caused him to engage in unprecedented forms of activity was the wondrous phenomenon of revelation, the heavenly message which he as the most lofty and qualified of men had been chosen to receive. Before then, no preliminary effort or particular inclination had been seen on his part that might have led to the bringing about of the sudden and remarkable transformation of the world he
was now about to accomplish.

The factor that had this profound effect on Muhammad, that changed that quiet and reflective man into an explosive source of revolutionary energy and enabled him to bring about such a profound transformation of humanity, from within the intense darkness of the Arabs' Age of Ignorance, was nothing other than revelation. It was a call that penetrated the very depths of the souls of human beings that melted the marrow of their bones, and directed all their
strivings to the attainment of perfection.

The command of revelation negated all the false and lying criteria which human beings had regarded as the measure of goodness and considered the sole means of evaluating human characteristics and habits, while, in fact, clothing falsehood in the garment of truth. It brought into operation new and clear criteria which showed human beings the goals to which they
should strive to advance and brought about creativity in their lives.

The veil of ignorance and silence was torn apart, the human beings' energies were set to work, the power of thought within them was aroused, and their spirits were borne aloft toward the infinite summit of being. A people who in their ignorance and lowliness would tear each apart
on account of the most insignificant things and had lost all virtue, thanks to their various forms of enslavement, now became, through Islam and its great concept of monotheism - the true pillar of humanity and the breaker of idols - so elevated of spirit and so self-sacrificing that they happily abandoned both their lives and their property. The remarkable stories of self-sacrifice on the part of those early Muslims will stand eternally
as examples of true nobility.

The Prophet of Islam had the vision and belief of a world leader, but he began to proclaim his Divine summons to monotheism in a relatively restricted sphere, a closed environment where tribal institutions exercised great influence and idols were counted as the most sacred and beloved of objects. It was an environment that was not in any way prepared to accept the
message of Divine unity.

The heavenly teachings of Islam and the culture to which they gave rise were superior not only to the intellectual atmosphere prevailing in the idolatrous society of the Arabs but also to all the religious doctrines and cultures of that age. The program for reforming systems of thought and culture that had become corrupt was laid down by a man who had never studied, who was unlettered, and who knew nothing of the religious books or the civilization of his age.

At first he invited his relatives to worship the Creator, and then the people of Mecca and the Arabian Peninsula. Finally he proclaimed to the entire world his mission as the last of the Prophets. Ali b. Abi Talib, upon whom be peace, was the first man to accept his religion, and his wife, Khadijah, was the first woman to believe in his heavenly mission. Gradually others, too, proclaimed their belief in the new religion. Ali, upon whom be peace, said: "One day the Prophet summoned his relatives and addressed them as follows:

'Children of AW al-Mutallib! I bring you something more excellent than anything the Arabs have ever brought you. I bring you as a gift the means of your salvation in this world and the hereafter, a Divine Command to which I invite your submission. Which among you will help me, so that he will be my brother, my successor and my legatee among you?' "All remained silent but I, who was younger than all of them, said: 'O Messenger of God, I will help you!' Muhammad, upon whom be peace, then said: "This is my brother, my successor and my legatee among you; listen to this words and accept them.' "

With his extraordinary powers of leadership and mature political sense, the Prophet began to refashion human beings by concentrating on their inner beings. He strove to awaken the sense of monotheism that was innate in them by drawing their attention to the mysteries of creation and acquainting them with the infiniteness of the universe. The Prophet had been born into an environment where human beings engaged in empty boasting out of their shortsightedness and tribal mentality, where privileges were based on unjust social conditions and prejudices.

Now he arose and swept aside all those false privileges. He established new values and concepts with respect to labor, life and social relations, in the framework of a series of rules and ordinances, and strove to concentrate all the goals and thoughts of the human being on a program for liberating peoples from slavery, and delivering the oppressed from the tyranny of emperors and kings. Even for those who do not regard these exalted aims as having a heavenly origin will admit that they are among the most exalted and previous values observable in human history.

The preaching of the Prophet remained hidden for three years. He established Islam secretly. Throughout the thirteen years that he concentrated his mission on Mecca, the leaders of the polytheists, who understood well the gravity of their situation, resisted him with obstinate

hostility, doing their utmost to preserve the beliefs and customs of the Age of Ignorance and to silence the liberating cry of Islam. They conducted themselves with extreme ferocity against all who had converted to Islam.

They fettered and chained those defenseless ones for their crime of having accepted Islam and left them lying hungry and thirsty on the ground beneath the burning sun of Mecca. They placed heavy stones on their bare breasts in an effort to make them forswear the religion of Muhammad. Yasir and Sumayyah, those two heroes, were subjected to the most barbaric of torturers and every day endured the weight of the heavy stones the Quraysh used to place on their breasts beneath the fiery rays of the sun. These were the first martyrs of Islam: the husband died under torture and the wife was martyred by Abu Jahl.

By applying these methods, the idolaters wanted to stifle Islam while it was still in the cradle. For it was a life and death struggle: if the call of the Prophet were to advance, they would lose forever their sovereignty and the empty privileges they had enjoyed. Envy, too, played an important role in intensifying their hostility to Islam. The continuation of this unpleasant situation turned the city of Mecca into a prison and a place of torture for the defenseless Muslims.

The polytheists made it forbidden even to listen to the verses of the Quran, and they appointed certain people to go out and meet incoming caravans and warn them not to make contact with the Muslims. Because of the pressure and cruelty of the Quraysh, a number of Muslims decided to leave Mecca and migrate to Ethiopia, in order to have there a safe and tranquil environment in which to practice their religion, and worship the One God, free from harassment by the unbelievers.

Even then the opponents of Islam did not abandon their persecution of them. The Quraysh sent two envoys to the ruler of Ethiopia in order to persuade him to send back the Muslims. But the ruler received the migrants hospitably and extended his protection to them, so that they were able to carry out their devotional duties in freedom in the land of Ethiopia. When the envoys of Quraysh presented gifts to the Emperor in an effort to have the refugees sent back to Mecca, he answered that since they had chosen him out of all rulers which whom to seek refuge, he could not expel them without first investigating them. When Ja'far b. Abi Talib, the spokesman of the migrants, spoke of the beliefs of the Muslims concerning Jesus, upon whom be peace, the Emperor was much impressed and said: "I swear by God that Jesus had no station beyond what these Muslim say.

" Although the corrupt ministers of the Emperor were displeased by his words, he praised the beliefs of the Muslims and gave them complete freedom, turning over to them the gifts that the

Qurayshi envoys had brought. He said that when God had given him power, He had not required any bribe of him, and that it was therefore inappropriate that he should now benefit from such gifts. Thus light triumphed over darkness, and the forces of polytheism and ignorance retreated in defeat and despair.

The Tactics of the Enemy

When the enemies of Islam saw that their power was crumbling in the face of the new order of monotheism and realized that Islam was felling all their idols, both material and mental, just like an axe felling trees, they first resorted to threats. When they saw that threats were useless, they tried by means of promises and the award of privileges to turn the Prophet back from the path on which he had embarked. But these efforts, too, proved fruitless as he rejected with disgust all their promises of power and wealth, with all the firmness demanded of the bearer of a heavenly mission. He proclaimed: "I swear by God that if you were to put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, I would never abandon my mission until the religion of God spreads over the globe or I lose my life in propagating it."

Ya'qubi writes as follows in his history: "The Quraysh told Abu Talib that his nephew was vilifying their gods, accusing them of insanity and proclaiming that their ancestors were in error. They asked him to tell the Prophet that they would give him all of their wealth if he would abandon his preaching. Muhammad, upon whom be peace, answered: 'God did not raise me up as a Prophet in order that I might accumulate the wealth of this world; rather, He raised me up to convey His message to mankind and to call men to Him.'" Then the enemy changed its tactics once more, and employed every conceivable weapon against this movement in order to destroy the newly constructed edifice of Islam.

Old enemies made peace with each other in order to destroy the Prophet. By attempting to blacken the fair name of the Prophet and sully his reputation, they wished both to quench the fire of hatred they felt in their hearts and to neutralize his summons and call. Everywhere they proclaimed that he was a magician, a sorcerer, a madman, a poet, and they stirred up the ignorant against him. This is the same satanic strategy that the enemies of truth always use in order to undermine and defeat great personalities. The Quran makes it plain that this strategy was not peculiar to the Age of the Prophet of Islam. It proclaims: "Never was a Prophet raised up for earlier peoples without men saying that he was a sorcerer or mad. Is this a legacy of denial they have transmitted from one age to the next? No, these people are themselves rebellious and transgressors." (51:52-53) The Prophet, however, consistently refrained from adopting an attitude of anger toward his enemies.

Although their fanatical prejudice, their shortsightedness, their blind traditionalism, and their calumnies increased the difficulties that he was facing, they were never able to arouse his anger. Instead, he sought always to bring them to see the truth, by means of spiritual instruction. Neither pressure nor promises, neither deprivation nor difficulty, were able to shake the determination of the Prophet. Nor did the spreading of cunning and baseless accusations yield any result, for the compelling logic of the Quran and its re-echoing melody were too profound and too exalted not to leave an effect on the mind of whoever heard it; or to captivate and transform them.

Even enemies were sometimes compelled to admit the truth. Tabarsi writes in his commentary on the Quran: "When Walid, the celebrated sage of the Arabs, heard the Prophet recite the verses of Surah Fussilat, he was profoundly affected. The Banu Makhzum gathered around him and he described the Quran to them as follows: 'It has a distinctive charm and a unique beauty. Its branches are laden with fruit and roots are blessed. It is an elevated form of speech, higher than all others.' Thus he spoke and went on his way, and the Quraysh thought he had embraced the religion of Muhammad, upon whom be peace."

Although the Prophet had vast resources of patience, he was sometimes distressed by the foolish conduct of his people. He would go into a corner until Divine command summoned him back to his grave responsibilities, for to desist for a single instant in striving toward the sacred goals that had been set for him was impermissible; he had to shun all rest and retreat. (See 74:1-4) One of the distinctive factors enabling the Prophets to succeed in the movements they launched was their steadfastness and power of endurance.

The Quran mentions the method followed by the Prophets in their struggles as follows: "Ishmael, Idris and Dhu 'l-Kifl were all steadfast and patient in fulfilling their missions." (21:98) All the envoys of God endured hardship and suffering when they were faced with denial and rejection, but they remained steadfast until the aid of God secured them their triumph

The Beginning of Migration

As a result of the oppressive atmosphere in Mecca and the unbridled persecution of the Muslims that threatened them constantly with imprisonment, torture and death, and in recognition of the fact that the Muslim warriors were not yet ready for battle, the command was given to migrate. The Prophet gave instructions that the Muslims leave the city one by one and proceed to Yathrib. The Quraysh understood well the danger this represented, and they stooped to all kinds of illicit means to prevent the Companions of the Prophet from departing, even taking their wives hostage. But true to their original decision, the Muslims began gradually

to leave the center of polytheism, ignorance and oppression, leaving behind their attachments
and their families in order to migrate.

The people of Yathrib took them into their embrace. Most of the Muslims had left, and Mecca was almost empty. This unusual situation and the disquieting news arriving from Medina greatly worried the Quraysh. Since the previous ill conduct of the leaders of unbelief and rejection had not yielded any results, they arrived at a grave and perilous decision: they planned to kill the Prophet. It was agreed that as soon as night fell, the designated assassins should go
about their work.

They surrounded the house of the Prophet at night, waiting in front of the door for the Prophet to emerge at dawn. They kept his room under surveillance throughout the night and were convinced that the son of Abdullah, who had not a single protector in the city, would be unable to escape their siege of his house and that his fate would be sealed at dawn. However, the Messenger of God ordered Ali, upon whom be peace, to sleep in his bed - Ali whose very spirit had been formed in Islam and who thought nothing of dying for the sake of God and the life of
the Prophet.

The Prophet then left the house secretly, in the company of Abu Bakr. At this point a man chanced by the house and asked those who were thirsting for the blood of the Messenger of God whom they were waiting for. When they replied, "Muhammad," he told them, "he has escaped your grasp." When dawn rended the breast of the horizons, they were astonished to
see Ali, upon whom be peace, rise up from the bed of the Prophet.

It is not quite clear how the Prophet managed to break through the circle that had been thrown round his house without arousing attention. What is certain is that God had willed to deliver His chosen Messenger from the grasp of those vile and lowly persons. The Prophet left Mecca in the heart of the night and took refuge in a cave, and then continued on to Medina using back roads. Once he reached the city, it was clear that the treacherous plan of the Quraysh had
ultimately harmed them and benefited Islam and the Muslims.

The powerful hand that had protected the burning torch of Islam for thirteen years against all harm was able with ease to bring this conspiracy to naught. Before the migration of the Prophet, a number of citizens of Medina had come to Mecca to seek the support of the Quraysh in the tribal wars that for years had pitted the Aws against the Khazraj. Despite the warnings of the Quraysh, they had listened to the words of the Prophet, upon whom be peace,
and had been deeply affected, even transformed, by them.

The next time that they came to Mecca in order to perform the pilgrimage, they had formally accepted the summons of the Messenger of God and embraced Islam. After leaving Mecca

and returning to their native city, they expended great efforts to enlighten the people of Yathrib and convey the Divine message to all classes of the population. This represented in itself a massive blow to the foundations of idolatry.

The people of Medina were exhausted by the long tribal wars, and they saw in the call of the Messenger a message of hope and a means of deliverance from the consuming fire of civil strife. In order to appreciate the need of society at that time for the great movement of Islam and to grasp the role played by Islam in putting an end to corruption and misguidance, we must understand the situation prevailing in the Arabian Peninsula.

Ali, upon whom be peace, said: "God sent Muhammad, upon whom be peace and blessings, to warn people away from the path in which they were engaged, and He appointed him trustee of His heavenly decrees. At that time, O Arabs, you aware following the worst of beliefs and customs, and you lived in the most deprived of all lands. You slept in the midst of rough stones and poisonous snakes, drank foul water, ate no proper food, split each other's blood, disregarded the ties of kinship. There were idols among you, and sin had rendered you impotent."

The migration of the Most Noble Messenger to Medina, which marked the beginning of the Islamic era, was the start of a new chapter in the history of Islam. Thereafter blows rained down continuously on the forces of corruption and falsehood. The Prophet's cause took root in Medina. His call went from house to house, and a new society crystallized. The powerful logic and creativity of the ideas set forth by Muhammad, upon whom be peace and blessings, were such that the previous cultural, moral and social structures of the people of Medina thoroughly collapsed,

together with all the customs that dominated their lives. The chains of slavery and the fetters of cruelty and oppression were torn asunder; the powerful were pulled down from their thrones of arrogance. The immortal shari'a brought by the Prophet to mankind as a gift of new norms of justice and elevated culture, and Medina became swiftly transformed into a religious, social and military base for the Islamic cause.

The experiences they had gone through in Mecca, the continued harassment and torture of the believers, the sundering of old ties and the forging of new ones, the continuous deepening of spiritual maturity - all this contributed to the development of the migrants, so that just as Medina became a center of spiritual and political power for the whole of Arabia, so, too, it became a base for the ultimate diffusion of Islam throughout the world. It was from there that the Prophet of Islam presented his message to the nations of the world.

He summoned all human beings to unite beneath the banner of monotheism and its vital, life-

giving teachings, so that in less than half a century the religion he had founded brought under its sway the great and prosperous nations of that day. It fell like a rain of mercy and blessing .on souls and hearts that were anxious to receive it. Those who fail